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ABSTRACT

Of the 7,396 new freshmen entering the University of Maryland, College Park in the fall of 1976, 2,738 completed the University New Study Census in the summer before their entry. The majority of these were 18 years old and almost all entered college directly from high school. Almost half indicated they would be living on campus, either in a residence hall or a sorority or fraternity house. Another third planned to live with parents or relatives. Although a substantial majority of new freshmen reported that they had been A or B students in high school, only 39 percent felt their high school had prepared them well for college. Most had selected UMCP as their first or second choice of college, and a third said they were attending because of its academic program. Depending on the division in which enrolled, the percent expecting to earn an advanced degree ranged from 40 to 77. Financial concerns were reflected in students' responses about degree completion and student employment. A substantial majority saw college as a means of obtaining career skills or deciding on a career goal, although few saw the function of the University to be solely career-related. The responses clearly indicate that freshmen were uncertain about several of their "survival skills": budgeting time wisely, studying efficiently, and earning satisfactory grades. Over one-fourth felt that math was their weakest area, while writing was cited by 16 percent and reading by 8 percent of the respondents. (Author/MSE)

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A PROFILE OF UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK, FRESHMEN, 1976-77

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SUMMARY

Of the 7396 new freshmen entering the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) in the fall of 1976, 2738 completed the University New Student Census (UNSC) in the summer before their entry. The majority of these new freshmen were 18 years old and almost all entered college directly from high school. Almost half (45%) indicated they would be living on campus, either in a residence hall or a sorority or fraternity house. Another third planned to live with parents or relatives.

Although a substantial majority (87%) of new freshmen reported that they had been A or B students in high school, only 39% felt that their high school had prepared them well for college (29% disagreed and 32% were neutral).

Most incoming freshmen reported that they had selected UMCP as their first (62%) or second (22%) choice of college, and 36% said that they were attending UMCP because of its academic program. Over two-thirds of the students expected to earn at least an M.A. or M.S. degree, with as many as 42% of the students in some divisions planning to earn a doctoral degree (either academic or medical). Depending on the division in which a student was enrolled, the percent expecting an advanced degree ranged from 40% to 77%.

Twenty-six percent of the incoming freshmen said they were "absolutely certain that I will obtain a degree;" of those who felt they might have to withdraw, 15% cited the opportunity to take a good job and 12% financial problems as their probable reason for leaving. Financial considerations were also reflected in the fact that over two-thirds (67%) of the incoming freshmen either had or expected to have a part-time job during college.

A substantial majority of 1976 UMCP freshmen saw college as a means of attaining career skills or deciding on a career goal. Slightly more than half (58%) said they would stay in college because a college degree was the only way to enter their chosen profession or graduate or professional school, while another 13% said college graduates got better jobs. Although a majority of students reported they were going to college for career-related reasons, few saw the function of the University to be solely career-related. Rather, almost half (46%) thought that the University's major function was to provide a general learning facility, while 30% said it was to develop personal and social skills of people.

The responses of incoming freshmen to the UNSC clearly indicate that they were uncertain about several of their "survival" skills. They expected budgeting time wisely (25%), studying efficiently (23%), and earning satisfactory grades (11%) to be their hardest adjustments to college. Their concern about study habits is also reflected in their report on the area in which they felt they were weakest: 23% said study habits were their weakest area, while another 19% cited other study-related skills, i.e., note-taking (7%) and taking exams (12%). Over one-fourth of the responding freshmen felt that math (26%) was their weakest area, while writing was cited by 16% and reading by 8% of the respondents.

General Description

New freshmen who entered the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) in the fall of 1976 and who completed the University New Student Census (UNSC) were drawn at random from all entering freshmen who attended two day orientation sessions (N = 2738) during the summer prior to entering the University. A total of 7396 new freshmen entered UMCP in the fall of 1976[1]. Of the students completing the UNSC, 97 percent[2] were between the ages of 16 and 18, with the majority 18 years old. Almost all (98%) entered college directly from high school, and for almost two-thirds (62%) UMCP had been their first choice of colleges to attend. An additional 22% indicated that UMCP had been their second choice. Their average SAT scores were 450 Verbal and 500 Math.

Almost half (45%) of the new freshmen indicated that they would be living on campus - either in a residence hall or a fraternity or sorority house. Another third (35%) planned to live with their parents, while 12% planned to share an off-campus apartment or house with someone else. Men were more likely than women to live at home, while women were more likely than men to live in a University residence hall or share an off-campus apartment, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1.

EXPECTED LOCATION OF FRESHMAN RESIDENCE (ITEM 18)

Place you will be living this semester	% All Freshmen	% Males	% Females
Parents' or guardian's home or other relative's home	35%	40%	32%
University residence hall	41	37	45
Fraternity or sorority house	4	5	4
Off-campus, alone	2	3	2
Off-campus, share	12	10	13

Students in the Division of Undergraduate Studies were more likely than those in any other division to live at home or with relatives, with almost half (46%) indicating this as the expected place of residence. In contrast, only one-fourth of the freshmen in the Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences expected to be living with their parents. Agricultural and Life Sciences students, along with those from the Allied Health Area, were more likely than students in any other division to be living in off-campus housing, with almost one in five of these freshmen indicating this as expected place of residence.

Of the students who expected to be living off-campus, a majority (27% of the total; 60% of those living off-campus) reported that they lived less than 10 miles each way from campus, while 17% (40% of off-campus students) reported that they lived from 11 to 51 miles from campus (see Table 2).

[1]Data furnished by the Data Research Center, University of Maryland, College Park.

[2]Percentages indicated in this report may not always add to 100% due to rounding or "other" responses.

Table 2.

DISTANCE FROM CAMPUS FOR COMMUTING STUDENTS (ITEM 19)

How far from campus will you be living?	% All Freshmen	% Males	% Females
Living on campus	43	40	46
Less than 3 miles (one way)	8	8	9
3-5 miles	8	8	7
6-10 miles	11	11	10
11-50 miles	17	20	14
51+ miles	0	0	1
Not sure yet	11	9	12
Other	2	2	2

A substantial majority (87%) of the incoming freshmen were A or B students in high school, and of these, 18% reported that they were either A or A+ students. However, only 39% of the students felt that their high schools had prepared them well for college. A majority of the students either were neutral (32%) about their high school experience or felt they were not well prepared (29%) to face thei years in college.

Just as with residence, students differed in high school grades and attitude toward their high school according to the division in which they were enrolled. Students in the Division of Agriculture and Life Sciences and those in Mathematical and Physical Sciences and Engineering were almost twice as likely to have been A or A+ students as those in Undergraduate Studies, Human and Community Resources, and Allied Health. Likewise, students in the latter three areas were far more likely than those in Agricultural and Life Sciences or those in Mathematical and Physical Sciences and Engineering to be B or C students in high school. Students with higher entering grades were also those most likely to feel they were well prepared by their high school to enter college. Those in Agricultural and Life Sciences and those in Mathematical and Physical Sciences and Engineering were considerably more likely than their fellow freshmen to think highly of their previous schooling.

The reason given most often by freshmen for coming to UMCP was that it "offered the kind of academic program I wanted (36%)." An additional 20 and 21% (respectively) reported that expenses or location were deciding factors, as indicated in Table 3.

Table 5.

FATHER'S AND MOTHER'S EDUCATION (ITEMS 13 & 14)

Parents' educational level	% Fathers	% Mothers
Less than high school	7%	5%
High school	17	39
Some college	16	21
College degree	54	28
Other	6	7

When asked to reflect on the event, institution or person who contributed most to their development in the past year, almost half (47%) of the students reported that friendships made or social life were most important. School-related activities (course work, independent study, teachers) taken together accounted for another 21% of the responses. There were few differences between male and female students on this item, although female students placed slightly more importance on friendships made, while males stressed social life.

According to the incoming freshmen, information about UMCP came primarily from University publications (33%) and friends (28%). Parents and other relatives were cited as a primary source by 22% of the students. Only 9% of the students reported that the major source of their information was a high school counselor, a teacher, or a University employee.

Academic Plans and Expectations

Students entering UMCP in 1976 had, as a whole, very high academic expectations. One-third expected to receive a B.A. or B.S. degree, while almost two-thirds said they intended to obtain an M.A., M.S., or higher degree (see Table 6). As might be expected, the division in which a student was registered is closely related to academic expectations. For example, students in Agricultural and Life Sciences leaned heavily toward advanced degrees: 22% said they expected to earn a medical degree (M.D., D.O., D.D.S., or D.V.M.)

Students in Mathematical and Physical Sciences and Engineering were more likely than those in any other division to expect to receive a Ph.D. degree, with 22% intending to earn that degree, while another 42% expected to receive an M.S. degree eventually.

Students in the Arts and Humanities and Human and Community Resources Divisions were more likely than others to expect to obtain either a B.A. or an M.A., but not a higher degree: 78% of Arts and Humanities and 86% of Human and Community Resources students were in this category.

Behavioral and Social Sciences students were more likely than any others to intend to receive a law degree, with 19% expressing this intention. On the other hand, Allied Health students, like those in Agricultural and Life Sciences, showed greater interest in advanced medical degrees (14% checked M.D. as the expected degree). However, almost half (49%) of students in this category expected only a B.A. or B.S. degree.

Table 3

MAIN REASON FOR DECIDING TO ATTEND UMCP (ITEM 7)

Main reason you decided to attend UMCP	% All Freshmen	% Males	% Females
Relatively inexpensive	21%	23%	19%
Geographical location	20	20	20
Offered kind of academic program I wanted	36	33	38
Friend or relative attends or attended	7	6	7
Was not accepted elsewhere	2	3	1
High school counselor/teacher suggested it to me	2	1	2
Other	12	13	11

Students in the Allied Health Area and Human and Community Resources Division were most likely to report that they selected UMCP because of its academic program, while those in the Agricultural and Life Sciences Division were most likely to cite money as a reason for attending.UMCP.

By far the greatest reported influence on the actual decision to enter college was the student's parents, with 55% of the incoming freshmen citing either father or mother for this role. An additional 8% of the students reported that other relatives had been the decisive influence, while 18% cited a friend, neighbor or high school teacher/counselor (see Table 4).

Table 4

SOURCE OF INFLUENCE ON DECISION TO ENTER COLLEGE (ITEM 8)

Who had been most influential in your decision to enter college	% All Freshmen	% Males	% Females
Father	36%	43%	31%
Mother	19	13	25
Other relative	8	8	8
Friend	11	10	12
Neighbor	0	0	0
High school counselor/teacher	7	7	8
Other	16	20	15

One reason for the greater paternal influence on the decision to attend college may be the fact that far more fathers than mothers have either some college or a college degree. Table 5 below points up the disparity in educational level between fathers and mothers of incoming students, but also illustrates the fact that over half of mothers and fathers have had at least some college.

Table 7

POSSIBLE REASONS FOR DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL IN THE FUTURE (ITEM 22)

Most likely possible cause for leaving school	% All Freshmen	% Males	% Females
Absolutely certain I will obtain a degree	26%	28%	24%
To accept a good job	15	15	15
To enter military service	2	3	1
It would cost more than my family or I could afford	12	9	15
Marriage	6	1	11
Disinterest in study	12	14	10
Lack of academic ability	9	9	8
Insufficient reading or other skills	1	2	0
Other	18	20	16

Finances

Although 98% of registering freshmen at UMCP graduated from high school in 1976 (i.e., entered college directly after high school), well over half reported having earned from $500 to more than $3000 in the past year. Only 9% of the students reported no income and an additional 7% reported that they had earned less than $99.00.

To have earned an income ranging between $500 and $3000, it is likely that many of the 1976 freshmen worked part-time during high school. Similarly, a majority of the freshman class either had, or was looking for, a part-time job. At the time the UNSC was completed, 62% of incoming freshmen were expecting to have a part-time job, while the remaining third did not intend to look for work. Of those who already had part-time jobs, the largest number worked 10-20 hours per week (18%), while only 3% worked over 30 hours.

Concern for finances was reflected in many responses to census items. For example, 12% of the students reported that if they left school it would be because "it would cost more than my family or I could afford." Only "to accept a good job" received more responses among those who felt they might drop out of school. Forty-six percent of the students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "I am concerned about my ability to finance a college education."

Table 6

HIGHEST ACADEMIC DEGREE STUDENTS INTEND TO EARN (ITEM 10)

Highest academic degree you intend to obtain	% All Freshmen	% Males	% Females
Associate	0%	0%	0%
Bachelor's degree	32	26	38
Master's degree	33	32	34
Ph.D. or Ed.D	12	15	10
M.D., D.O., D.D.S., D.V.M.	10	12	8
L.L.B. or J.D.	6	9	4
B.D. or M.Div.	0	0	0
Other	7	7	6

According to the UNSC data, few students expected to drop out of the University. Only 6% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "There is a good chance I will drop out temporarily." Even when faced with the hypothetical possibility of their withdrawing from the University, the largest number of students (26%) reported that they were "absolutely certain" that they would earn a college degree. That is, approximately one-fourth of the freshmen did not entertain the possibility of withdrawing from the University. Of the remainder, the most likely reasons for dropping out included to accept a good job (15%), because of financial problems (12%), or because of loss of interest (12%), as indicated in Table 7.

When distributed by division, incoming freshmen show interesting patterns in reference to chances of (and reasons for) dropping out. For example, students in the Mathematical and Physical Sciences and Engineering Division were least likely to believe that they would drop out for any reason (31%) while those in Undergraduate Studies were most likely to feel they may one day drop out because of "loss of interest" (15%). Interestingly enough (in view of what we will see later with reference to career orientation), students in Arts and Humanities are more likely than those in other divisions to foresee the possibility of dropping out to accept a good job (25%).

Table 9

MOST LIKELY REASON FOR REMAINING IN COLLEGE AND GRADUATING (ITEM 20)

Most likely reason for remaining in college to complete requirements for graduation	% All Freshmen	% Males	% Females
College graduates get better jobs	13%	15%	12%
College degree is the only way I can enter my chosen profession	38	35	40
I must have a degree in order to enter graduate or professional school	20	22	18
Parents or relatives expect me to	3	3	3
The opportunity to meet and know many new and different people	5	4	6
College graduates earn more money	4	4	3
Experience gained from extracurricular activities	3	3	3
I enjoy studying and academic work	4	4	5
Other	10	10	10

Again, a student's division seems to be related to career orientation. Students in the Allied Health Area were more likely than those in any other division to give a "job related" reason for staying in college and graduating (85% responded in this fashion), while students in the Agricultural and Life Sciences Division were also very career oriented (77 % gave career-related reasons for staying in college.) On the other hand, only 51% of the Arts and Humanities students and 63% of Undergraduate Studies students gave reasons for staying in college which were directly related to future career goals. This is not surprising, in view of the fact that these students were also less likely to know for certain where their careers may lie.

Although a majority of students reported that they were going to college for career-related reasons, surprisingly few saw the major function of the University to be preparing people for jobs (14%). In contrast, almost half (46%) saw the University as a means for providing a general learning facility, and another 30% saw it as a way of developing personal and social skills. Very few students (only 2% each) saw the University's function to be serving as a force for social change or training and developing researchers.

When considering careers in terms of the variables most important in their selection, the largest number of students (32%) said that they want to make an important contribution to society and/or work with people. Another 34% chose one or another of the three "payoff" categories: job openings readily available, rapid career advancement possible, and well-respected, prestige occupation. Only 17% cited "intrinsic interest in the field" as their main reason for entering their major. Students in Allied Health and Human and Community Resources were most likely to feel that their contribution to society was the most important variable in their career choice. In contrast, only 14%

Career Orientation

A substantial majority of 1976 UMCP freshmen (68%) saw college as a means of attaining career skills or deciding on a career goal. In contrast, over one-fourth (28%) cited personal improvement objectives such as improving self-understanding, becoming independent in thinking and behavior, and so forth (see Table 8).

Table 8

MOST IMPORTANT CURRENT EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVE (ITEM 12)

Most important current educational objective	% All Freshmen	% Males	% Females
Learn skills directly applicable to my career goals	50%	53%	48%
Decide upon a career goal	18	17	18
Learn to write and speak better than now	5	7	4
Improve my self understanding	4	4	5
Learn more about arts and humanities	2	1	3
Get to know people	3	2	3
Become independent in thinking and behavior	11	8	13
Learn to take a stand	3	3	3
Other	5	5	4

When the freshmen are considered in terms of their divisions, some interesting patterns emerge. For one, students who are certain of their career goals are those for whom the college experience is interpreted as a career-skill seeking experience. Thus, only 5% of the Allied Health students (substantially less than in any other division) claimed that they still needed to decide on a career goal, while three-fourths reported they were in college to learn job-related skills. This same pattern (though less extreme) is seen among students in the Mathematical and Physical Sciences and Engineering and the Agricultural and Life Sciences Divisions. As would be expected, the students who were most likely to express a need to decide on a career goal were those in the undergraduate Studies Division. Over one-third of these students expressed a need to determine their direction.

The career orientation discussed above was also reflected in the reasons freshmen gave for why they may stay in college and graduate. Slightly more than half (51%) said they felt college graduates get better jobs or that they must have a college degree to enter their chosen profession. A closely related option (i.e., that the degree is needed in order to enter graduate or professional school) drew positive responses from another 20% of the freshmen, thus raising the "career oriented" proportion of responses to 71%. Relatively few freshmen said they would remain in college because their parents or relatives expect it (3%) or because college graduates make more money (4%). (See Table 9.)

of students in the Division of Mathematical and Physical Sciences and Engineering chose the "humanistic" response category; instead, students in this division led all other in citing "job openings usually available/rapid career advancement possible" as reasons for going into their field.

Translating career orientation into academic reality may be difficult, a fact which is seemingly reflected in the fact that over one-fourth (28%) of the freshmen indicated that they would be interested in seeking counseling regarding educational-vocational plans. Students in divisions with the least "career" content were also those who felt they would need some educational/vocational assistance in the future.

Another indication of the practical side of career orientation in college can be seen in the strong interest shown by freshmen in gaining work experience in their major prior to graduating. An astounding 90% of the students either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that they would like such an opportunity, while only 1% disagreed. Still other evidence is found in responses to the hypothesis: "If better jobs were available to high school graduates, I would not go to college." Over three-fourths (77%) said "No." Thus, these students evidently felt that college means more than preparation for a job.

Need for Campus Services

It is clear from responses to a number of UNSC questions that incoming freshmen felt uncertain about several of their college "survival" skills. For example, when asked what they expected to be the hardest part of adjusting to college, almost half (48%) indicated that budgeting time wisely and studying efficiently were of most concern. Good grades and selecting a major/career were each cited by 11% of the freshmen. (See Table 10.)

Table 10

EXPECTATION ABOUT HARDEST PART OF ADJUSTING TO COLLEGE (ITEM 11)

Hardest part of adjusting	% All Freshmen	% Males	% Females
Budgeting time wisely	25%	24%	26%
Studying efficiently	23	26	20
Earning satisfactory grades	11	12	10
Selecting major field/career	11	10	11
Getting to know people	10	9	12
Becoming a critical/independent thinker	7	6	8
Meeting financial expenses	5	5	6
Deciding extent of campus involvement	4	4	4
Other	4	5	3

Students in the Behavioral and Social Sciences Division and those in Human and Community Resources were most likely to be concerned about budgeting time wisely. Students in Human and Community Resources turned up again among those most concerned about study habits, along with students in the Allied Health Area.

The concern about study habits illustrated in Table 10 is echoed in the freshmen's report on the area in which they felt they were weakest. Almost one-fourth (23%) reported that study habits constituted their weakest area, while another 19% cited other study-related skills, i.e., note taking and taking exams. Over one-fourth of all responding freshmen (26%) felt that mathematics was their weakest area, while reading and writing were cited by 8 and 16% of the respondents, respectively. (See Table 11.)

Table 11

AREAS IN WHICH FRESHMEN FELT THEY WERE WEAKEST (ITEM 23)

Area of greatest weakness	% All Freshmen	% Males	% Females
Mathematics	26%	18%	33%
Study habits	23	28	19
Writing	16	19	13
Taking exams	12	8	15
Note taking	7	7	7
Getting along with others	2	2	1
Reading	8	10	6
Other	7	7	8

Not surprisingly, students in the Mathematical and Physical Sciences and Engineering Division foresaw no problems with mathematics, but they did show greater than average concern about their study habits (28% gave this response). Again, as would be expected, students in Arts and Humanities and Human and Community Resources were least sure of themselves where mathematics are concerned and indicated this as their area of greatest concern.

Although study and content skills are obviously of concern to freshmen, few felt they would constitute a reason for leaving the University before graduating. Only 10% gave these answers, while over a fourth (26%) reported that they were absolutely certain they would complete college. Further discussion of this item is found in the section concerned with academic plans.

Another indication of the incoming freshman's practical concern about study skills and other academic areas comes in the responses to a question about the area in which the student is interested in seeking counseling/educational skills at the University. A substantial number (45%) indicated that they might seek help in study skills, reading, vocabulary, and spelling. Table 12 illustrates the areas in which assistance may be needed.

"Improve the quality of black colleges to bring them up to the level of the University," while very few (4%) supported the idea of quotas. Only 16% of the students felt the State should "work actively to draw whites to black colleges and vice versa."

The single most often cited extracurricular activity "of interest" to incoming students was intramural or intercollegiate sports (27%), while unspecified special interest groups were cited by another 27% of the students. The strong interest in sports is echoed in the highly favorable reaction to the statement "I expect to participate in some form of intramural athletics at the University." Almost half (48%) of the students agreed or strongly agreed with that statement, with men (63%) being more likely than women (34%) to show such enthusiasm.

UMCP 1976-77 freshmen appear to be more strongly attracted to basketball than to football: 39% of the students agreed or strongly agreed that they would closely follow the football team, while 52% of the students reported the same feeling about basketball. As might be expected, male students were significantly more likely than women to plan to follow sports closely.

Table 12

AREAS OF INTEREST IN SEEKING COUNSELING OR EDUCATIONAL SKILLS AT THE UNIVERSITY (ITEM 34)

Area of interest in seeking assistance	% All Freshmen	% Males	% Females
Counseling: educational/ vocational plans	28%	23%	32%
Learn to study more efficiently	23	24	22
Develop larger vocabulary	8	7	8
Improve writing	7	8	7
Improve reading skills	6	8	5
Counseling: emotional/social concerns	4	3	4
Improve spelling	1	1	1
Not interested	12	11	13
Other	12	15	9

Another service of interest to a number of students was a day care center for children of students. Forty-three percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed about the need for such a center. Surprisingly, women were only slightly more likely to want a center than were men.

There are on campus a group of individuals with more than the normal concerns and problems; these are the physically handicapped students who must often overcome significant barriers to get a college education. Eighteen percent of the freshmen indicated they had some type of physical handicap, with a majority of these reporting some loss of sight.

Students were concerned about handicapped students and over two-thirds indicated that the State should develop special facilities and services for physically handicapped students on all campuses, rather than on one or not at all. A strong commitment to helping others is evidenced in the fact that over two-thirds (67%) of the students agreed that they would be willing to pay $1 or $2 extra per year to establish a disabled student service program on campus. Men and women students were equally likely to support such a plan.

Student Attitudes and Preferences

New freshmen at UMCP gave evidence of concern about many types of social issues. The social issues of most concern to the responding students were the environment (23%) and the economy (19%). Crime followed the economy as the issue of greatest concern (17%), with racism and sexism drawing 15% and 2% respectively. Drug usage and the energy crisis attracted few supporters, with 4% of the students selecting each option as "most important for society to resolve."

When asked to select the best way for the State of Maryland to provide higher education for blacks and whites, the largest number (44%) of incoming freshmen felt that things should be allowed to "happen naturally, with no further programs." An additional 22% supported the separate but equal concept,